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ABSTRACT

Creating alternative opportunities for mid- and late-career change teacher education candidates has been a controversial issue in teacher education for a number of years. Many professional teacher organizations and teacher education societies have resisted or discouraged the development of programs which opened their doors to professionals in areas other than education who wished to enter teacher education. This 5-year review of an intensive teacher-training program at Siena College (New York) compared traditional-age teacher education candidates with mid- or late-career change candidates on a variety of variables. No significant differences were found in the performance of either group. It should be noted that mid-career change candidates had, for the most part, previously taken upper-level courses in their respective content areas and held a degree in a liberal arts field prior to entering the program. These candidates also reflected a higher maturity level and brought practical experience into the classroom. The findings of this study indicate that mid-career change teacher education candidates can perform as well as traditional teacher education candidates and, therefore, should be considered a viable and meaningful population to serve as teachers in the schools. (Author/JD)

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Secondary Level Teacher Preparation For Mid-Career Change Students: Five Years of Performance

By David R. Murray

Introduction:

The need for alternative programs to prepare teachers for public service has begun to emerge as an area of interest in professional teacher education. Moreover, many government officials at the state and national levels are encouraging the development of these programs. According to TIME magazine, " 2,500 teachers in 24 states were trained through alternative certification programs," (Tifft, 1989). This data was reported for the 1987-88 school year and many institutions expect this trend to become more popular as proponents of mid-career change candidates become more vocal. Notably, in a recent speech given to a joint session of Congress of the United States, the President, George Bush, strongly endorsed the creation of alternative teacher training programs in order to bring "fresh talent" into the teacher work force. In the education community, advocates on the need for alternative programs have also expressed their opinions. For example, Dianne Worthy, a supervisor of teacher education in the state of South Carolina, endorses alternative programs because she believes that mid-career candidates bring a wealth of life experience into teaching. She further suggests that many mid-career change teacher education candidates make considerable sacrifices by leaving the private sector to enter public service in America's schools (Tifft, 1989). Some of these experiences and personal sacrifices made by mid-career change teachers were most recently portraved bv the success

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story of Jaime Escalante in the film "Stand and Deliver." Mr. Escalante left the private sector to become a teacher at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles. The documentary clearly demonstrates his personal sacrifices as well as his personal commitments to the students he teaches; many of whom were labeled by the system as inner-city losers. With a great deal of courage and integrity, he brought these inner-city kids through the rigor of an advanced placement test in calculus and took on the Educational Testing Service when they questioned the performance of the predominantly Hispanic class (Warner Bros., 1988).

However, there has been some recorded dissention among the teaching ranks of veteran teachers. The most outspoken critics have been representatives of the teachers' unions. Karen Joseph of the New Jersey Education Association, reported that many teachers are in direct opposition to any training program that would be different from the kind of programs that they themselves had undergone (Tifft, 1989). Also, many mid-career change students, while engaged in student teaching, had suggested that cooperating teachers were very reluctant to share skills with them; perhaps feeling resentment or insecurity in serving in a mentor type of relationship with older teacher education candidates. Whatever opposition may exist, projected demographics on the future teacher work force will compel officials to foster change in the way teachers are prepared. The state of New York, for example, has already engaged a task force to investigate and develop, "a comprehensive, long-range strategy for recruiting, training, and retraining large numbers of able people, including minorities and people in mid- and late-careers" (Commissioners Task Force on the Teaching Profession, 1988). In any case, many of the issues concerning the induction

of mid-career change teacher education candidates warrants investigation within the context of an existing teacher education program. Although alternative programs existed to attract mid-career change students during the last teacher shortage, two separate and independent computerized bibliographic searches suggested that the literature on these programs was scanty at best. However, there are some programs still in existence that may be examined.

Siena College, located in up-state New York has had an intensive teacher training program primarily designed for liberal arts majors, for a number of years. The program services both traditional undergraduates from a variety of discipline areas and mid-career change post graduate students. Fortunately, departmental data on both groups were available over a five period for a comparative analysis. This data recorded on standardized instruments were primarily designed for administrating the program within the institution. Among the data sources available included official transcripts, admissions applications, and student evaluation forms. The evaluation forms were summative reports submitted from cooperating teachers, academic supervisors from the various disciplines within the college and education supervisors. In addition, NTE scores, individual course evaluations from students and classroom observational reports from the department head were also available to be used to conduct a formal program review. However, to establish an initial orientation to the program and to insure some brevity to this article, I will not discuss in detail the last three components at this time. As Siena's program was the first registered post graduate certificate program designed specifically for mid-career change students in

the state of New York and will be reviewed by the State Education Department for reaccreditation, the timing for this internal review is most appropriate.

The Purpose of the Review:

The purpose of the study was to examine the basic components of the Siena College teacher education program and to engage in a comparative analysis of mid-career change post graduate certificate candidates as compared to students of a traditional undergraduate population. Through this documentation and systematic analysis, both the validity and professional justification of this type of alternative program will begin to emerge. The null hypotheses (the hypotheses stating that no difference is expected) was used in the comparison of the two groups within the populations. To further delineate the problem, review objectives were also defined to examine specific relationships that would produce evidence to support the hypothesis.

The Problem:

Objectives of inquiry were defined to direct the program review process. They were as follows:

1. To determine which subject areas or disciplines foster mid-career change students and determine any significant differences as compared to traditional undergraduate students;

2. To determine wether there is any significant differences in prior academic success between post-graduate teacher education candidates and traditional undergraduates prior to entering the professional semester program;

3. To identify any significant differences between post-graduate teacher education candidates and traditional candidates in professional education courses;

4. To identify and analyze any significant differences in field supervisors evaluation reports of post-graduate certificate students and traditional undergraduates;

5. To determine if there is any relationship between GPA and success in the program or between various segments of the program.

The Review Procedures:

As the program in teacher education was in place for a number of years to accommodate both traditional undergraduates and postgraduate mid-career change students, data was available for analysis. Multiple measures were used from a variety of sources. After a through review of the literature, the following methodological considerations were implemented.

A transcript analysis of both groups was conducted to assess differences, if any, prior to admittance into the program. Transcripts were also reviewed to discern academic success within the professional courses of study. Also, evaluation sheets

from academic supervisors, education department supervisors and cooperating teachers were reviewed. To insure consistency of reporting, a data collection sheet was constructed to collate the data from the many sources. To test the the hypothesis, several descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. For example, a T-Test was calculated to identify any differences between the two groups under review. Also, a Pearson - R correlation technique was computed to examine various relationships among the data. Finally, tables were constructed to present the review findings.

The Findings:

Beverly T. Watkins published an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, suggesting that, demographic trends may be of concern in the future preparation of teacher education candidates. These concerns were related to projected imbalances for the preparation of teachers in specific critical areas such as mathematics and the sciences (Watkins, 1981). Therefore, candidates were examined by discipline areas.

Over the five year period of review, there were no notable trends in any particular disciplines in regard to admissions of teacher education candidates (refer to table 1). However, some differences can be observed in the math and science areas in terms of undergraduate and certificate candidate enrollment. The science areas reflect a great many post graduate certificate students. While in the math area, many of the candidates come from the Siena undergraduate population. This would suggest that the science area in particular, depends on post graduate candidates in order to

maintain a reasonable representation. Table 2 provides a profile of the percentage of teacher education candidates by the type of student and by discipline area.

Table 1
Total Enrollment by Discipline Area
and Academic Year

Year	Social Studies	English	Science	Math	Language	Business
1983-84	10	7	10	7	3	0
1984-85	7	5	4	4	1	0
1985-86	7	11	10	7	2	2
1986-87	10	10	6	10	5	8
1987-88	9	15	12	6	5	8

*Note: Religious Studies not included

Table 2
Percentage Distribution of Students
by Type and Discipline Area

	Social Studies		English		Science		Math		Language		Business	
Year	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS
1983-84	60.0	40.0	57.1	42.9	10.0	90.0	85.7	14.3	33.3	66.7	0.0	0.0
1984-85	57.1	42.8	60.0	40.0	25.0	75.0	50.0	50.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1985-86	42.9	57.1	81.8	18.2	30.0	70.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	50.0	50.0
1986-87	40.0	60.0	60.0	40.0	33.3	66.7	60.0	40.0	80.0	20.0	37.5	62.5
1987-88	41.7	58.3	73.3	26.7	41.7	58.3	66.7	33.3	40.0	60.0	50.0	50.0

SU: Siena Undergraduates; CS: Post Graduate Certificate Students

During the time period under review, only one year yielded any significant difference in the admission GPA's of the undergraduate and post-graduate teacher education students. In 1985-86 academic year, post graduate certificate students appeared to have lower mean grade point averages. However, the GPA's were well

above the required mean established for admission into the program. This difference may be attributed to the fact that post graduate certificate candidates' grades reflected a completed baccalaureate program . The traditional undergraduate candidate will need to acquire at least 15 more credit hours to complete their undergraduate degree requirements. With exception of the difference in the total amount of credit hours accumulated, admission criteria were identical. Table 3 presents a comparison of admission levels and academic success as reflected by GPA's prior to admission to the education department.

Table 3
Comparisons of Admissions Levels
and Prior Academic Success

	Mean GPA Upon Admission to the Program		
Year	Undergraduate	Certificate Student	t-test Score
1983-84	3.107	3.008	- 0.719
1984-85	2.944	3.060	- 2.126
1985-86	3.374	3.010*	0.850
1986-87	3.021	2.892	- 1.223
1987-88	3.107	3.081	- 0.212

*significant difference at the .05 level

Prior to undergoing student teaching, both undergraduate and post graduate certificate students are required to take twelve semester hours of professional course work in education. The courses include a foundations course entitled Issues in Contemporary American Education, (ED 01); Educational Psychology, (ED 02); Methods in Secondary Education, (ED 20); and Communications Laboratory for Secondary Teachers, (ED 22). With the exception of Educational Psychology, no significant differences were observed. However, for three of the five years under

review, post graduate certificate students appeared to do significantly better in the study of Educational Psychology. Table 4 provides a comparative analysis of the professional education courses reported by the two types of student groups.

Table 4
Comparative Analysis of Certificate Students and Undergraduate Students in Professional Education Courses

	ED01		ED02		ED20		ED22	
Year	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS
1983-84	3.53	3.34	2.95	3.34*	3.53	3.58	3.32	3.32
1984-85	3.6	3.54	2.88	3.21	3.36	3.39	3.34	3.46
1985-86	3.59	3.75	3.28	3.35	3.73	3.65	3.36	3.45
1986-87	3.5	3.5	2.77	3.29*	3.48	3.48	2.87	3.06
1987-88	3.55	3.42	2.93	3.26*	3.7	3.56	3.35	3.06

*significant difference at the .05 level
SU: Siena Undergraduates; CS: Post Graduate Certificate Students

Student teaching in a secondary or middle school represents nine credit hours during the professional semester program. Within that clinical experience, students are supervised and evaluated by three different professionals. In addition to the cooperating teacher, the student teacher is observed and evaluated by an educational supervisor from the department and an academic supervisor in the student's major area of teaching. Students are encouraged to undergo self evaluations as well. A final evaluation form is completed by each supervisor and the average of the three usually represents the final grade in student teaching. The evaluation form rates the student teacher over-all on a 5 point scale; 1 represents excellent; 2 is good; 3 is average; 4 is fair and 5 is poor. The students are rated on scholarship, planning, managing instruction, evaluating instruction, interpersonal relations and professional

growth. For the purpose of this report, the competency areas will be reported together by year for a total comparison. Both the competencies and a sample evaluation form are included in the Student Teaching Handbook (Hayden, Flatt & Murray, 1988). Although there are some minor differences from year to year between the groups, no significant differences generally exist. It is worth noting, however, that throughout the five years, education supervisors rate the students higher than do the other two professional groups involved in the evaluation. This may be due to the fact that the education faculty have more exposure to the students and this exposure is over a longer duration. Also, as researchers in the pedagogical sciences, they may have a better understanding of what skills an entrance level teacher should or should not have. During the 1986-87 academic year, both cooperating teachers and subject area supervisors appeared to rate the traditional undergraduates lower than in other years. Table 5 presents the data by year and by supervisory ratings.

Table 5
A comparative Analysis of Field Supervisory
Evaluation Reports During Student Teaching
(All Competency Areas)

Supervisor	Cooperating Teacher		Subject Supervisor		Education	
	SU	CS	SU	CS	SU	CS
1983-84	1.68	1.89	1.86	1.73	1.72	1.50
1984-85	1.71	2.05	1.76	1.85	1.68	1.79
1985-86	1.80	1.87	1.70	1.89	1.64	1.61
1986-87	2.31	1.86	2.13	1.82	1.55	1.93
1987-88	1.44	1.54	1.64	1.67	1.66	1.44

*based on a scale of 1-5; 1 is the highest value

When we examined students by GPA and compared it with their success during the professional semester, there appeared to be no direct correlation. This would suggest that the students' GPA does not necessarily reflect how well they will do in their teacher education preparation. For instance, a student who enters the program with a low GPA might do well in the Professional Semester program. The reverse of this may also be true. Therefore, we might conclude that even students with high grades in the liberal arts, need professional courses of study in teacher education. The data may also suggest that a person who may not be as strong in his or her liberal arts preparation may excel in pedagogical studies and in the clinical field component. A correlation coefficient was used and an analysis of the data is presented in table 6.

Table 6
Correlation of Prior GPA 's to Successful
Completion of the Professional Semester
in Teacher Education

Year	Certificate Student	Siena Undergraduate	Both
1983-84	.16	.62	.44
1984-85	.65	.65	.68
1985-86	.30	.54	.44
1986-87	.31	.30	.27
1987-88	.63	.43	.55

Discussion:

After examining the findings of the program under review, it is obvious that the null hypothesis has been accepted. That is to say, there is no differences between traditional undergraduates and post graduate certificate candidates in relation to identifying trends in the successful completion of the professional education program. It is perhaps the more subtle characteristics that makes each group special and unique in their own right.

Although the data represented in this study is comparatively small, and from one specific program, it has clearly brought into focus the importance of the mid-career change student in teacher education programs. The validity of including this group in teacher education has been clearly established. Any apprehension on the part of the various segments of the education profession towards accepting mid-career students is not warranted. Furthermore, efforts should be directed towards insuring that alternative programs undergo the same scrutiny in accreditation as traditional programs and the focus of the evaluation be placed upon the quality of the programs. A recent report from the Rand Corporation cautions that some alternative programs in math and science, for example, received low ratings from their students (Olson, 1989). Alternative programs must provide adequate preparation for their students. They must build on their students' liberal arts background and experience, and at the same time, provide them with the professional skills they need to have in order to be successful in the classroom.

Recommendations:

As the American population continues to change demographically, and the need for well trained teachers becomes a more pressing issue, mid-career change students will become more of a commonplace than a novelty. One of the major objectives of education as we enter the 1990's, is to begin to focus on the needs of the independent learner. In order to adapt to individual differences, it makes good sense that we provide a teacher work force that is as diverse as the population we serve. A teacher work force should represent a diversity of age, come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences and be willing to share these differences and their experiences with their students. Additionally, there are commonalties that should bind them together. For example, they should have a love of children, and be committed to both equality and excellence, the two major factors that all effective schools have in common. Should alternative programs of teacher preparation be able to strike a balance between addressing the special needs of the mid-career student and providing the basic competences required to enter the teaching profession, I see no reason why they should not exist. In fact, I personally find it highly desirable.

There are several areas that will require further investigation. For example, a follow up survey of the teacher education program graduates needs to be conducted to assess their success in the profession and acceptance by those in the profession. A great deal needs to be learned about the mid-career change candidate and how this

special population can best serve in the profession. Teacher education programs in turn, need to identify what special needs are required of the mid-career change candidate to necessitate a smooth transition into the teaching profession.

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